

The meaning of public action

About the course

Public action is at the core of a crisis of meaning.

Faced with criticism of public spending, loss of confidence by citizens in public institutions, a tough economic climate and poor visibility on the future of society, public servants are expressing their unease and questioning the meaning of their duties, just as citizens are questioning their own futures and the future of public services battling with cost cuts and the closure of local services.

In this course, we will be exploring together the various characteristics of this crisis and its causes and identifying what is required to reaffirm the meaning of public action and better plan for the future.

What kind of public action do we wish for the future and what are the challenges faced? What is needed to guide how public services are run and take action on a day-to-day?

To answer these questions, we will be looking at concepts related to public action drawn from the Republican experience.

Economists, historians, philosophers, political scientists, policy-makers and association leaders will define the concepts, shine a light on current developments and share the challenges they believe public action needs to respond to. We will also take a comparative approach with the participation of several public officials from countries in the Mediterranean area. They will speak about the similarities or differences of their particular contexts, associated values and specific challenges.

After this course, you will be armed with knowledge that will allow you to sharpen your understanding and opinion of the meaning of public action. You will be able to assess how current rhetoric and new concepts add or subtract meaning, support or challenge fundamental values, are encouraging or demotivating. At the end of the course, you will be able to define all the concepts covered, pinpoint their position in the evolution of ideas and analyse how they overlap or contradict one another.

A comparison with other Mediterranean countries will further allow you to identify the concepts that are universally agreed to define the meaning of public action and those concepts that are particular to a given context or time period.

Format

This course combines concise presentations on developments, current debates and concepts with interviews with experts from France and countries in the Mediterranean area.

Each session is structured around:

- a video introducing the issue in hand

- animated clips presenting related developments, concepts and current debates
- interviews with experts from France and countries in the Mediterranean region
- quizzes to help you remember the concepts addressed
- printed resources: glossaries and bibliographies

Who is this course aimed at?

This course is primarily aimed at senior officials and senior managers working for the government, regional authorities and the public hospitals body in France and countries in the Mediterranean area.

More broadly it concerns anyone seeking to join the dots between current debates on public action, public services and the challenges to meet in the interests of our society's future.

Teaching team

Vincent Potier

Director General of France's National Centre for the Territorial Public Service (CNFPT), Vice President Europe of the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA)

Gwénaëlle Juan

Meaning of public action project director

Sabra Bennasr

Territorial administration student, Léo Lagrange class

Andreas Korb

Director of International Cooperation

Speakers

FRANCE

- **Jean-Pierre Chevènement:** Minister of Research, Technology and Industry (1981-1983), Minister of National Education (1984-1986), Minister of Defence (1988-1991), Senator (2008-2014), President of the Fondation Res Publica think tank.
- **Pascal Engel:** Philosopher, Director of Studies at the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS), member of the Centre for Research in Art and Language (CRAL, CNRS, EHESS)
- **François Flahaut:** Director Emeritus of Research at the CNRS, member of the editorial board for *L'Homme* journal
- **Bettina Laville:** Counsellor of State, founding president of Comité 21, Editor-in-chief of the *Vraiment Durable* journal

- **Anicet Le Pors:** Honorary State Counsellor, Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reforms (1981-1984), Senator (1977-1981) and Regional Counsellor for Hauts-de-Seine (1985-1998)
- **Clément Le Bras-Thomas:** Co-president of FP21 (association of young civil servants), General Secretary of DGA Territoires et Mobilités for Essonne's departmental council
- **Yannick L'Horty:** Economist, Professor at Paris-Est Marne-la-Vallée University and Director of the 'Work, Employment and Public Policy' Research Federation at the CNRS
- **Hélène Orain:** Director General of the Palais de la Porte Dorée – National Museum of the History of Immigration – tropical aquarium
- **Vincent Potier:** Director General of France's National Centre for the Territorial Public Service (CNFPT), Vice President Europe of the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA)
- **Pierre Radanne:** President of the 4D association (Dossiers and Debates for Sustainable Development), specialist in energy and climate matters
- **Christophe Ramaux:** Economist, researcher at the Sorbonne Centre for Economics
- **Yvette Roudy:** Deputy Minister for Women's Rights (1981-1985), Minister for Women's Rights (1995-1986)
- **Olivier Rouquan:** Political scientist, speaker/senior expert and associate researcher at CERSA (French National Centre for Scientific Research) Université Panthéon Assas (Paris II)
- **Stéphane Rozes:** President of CAP (Advice, Analysis and Insights), professor at Sciences-Po and HEC
- **Benjamin Stora:** Historian and sociologist, President of the Advisory Board at the Palais de la Porte Dorée
- **Nicolas Subileau:** Associate Director of Pluricité, associate professor at Sciences Po Lyon
- **Emilie Tardivel:** Philosopher, Institut Catholique de Paris

EGYPT

- **Hanan El-Naggar:** Professor at Al-Azhar University (Cairo), former dean at the Business School

ITALY

- **Luciano Vandelli:** Professor at the University of Bologna and member of the European OLA (Observatory of Local Autonomy) network
- **Massimo Balducci:** Professor at the University of Florence and expert at the Council of Europe

LEBANON

- **Lamia Moubayed:** Director of the Basil Fuleihan Finance Institute in Beirut
- **Fadia Kiwan:** Director of the Political Science Institute at Saint Joseph University and the Public service and governance observatory in Beirut

MOROCCO

- **Chafika Agueznay:** Professor at the National School of Administration in Rabat

PALESTINE

- **Nabeel Shaath:** Advisor on foreign and international affairs for the Palestinian Presidency
- **Nihad Younis:** Director of the Palestinian Public Finance Institute

TUNISIA

- **Adel Benyakhlef:** Director General of the Centre for Training and Support to Development (CFAD) in Tunis
- **Khaoula Labidi-Dridi:** Public services advisor, Director General of Learning and Development
- **Maher Sellami:** Director General of the National Administration School in Tunis

OTHERS

- **Daphné Bogo:** Territorial administration student, Léo Lagrange class
- **Thomas Doublic:** Territorial administration student, Léo Lagrange class
- **Sofiane Sahraoui:** Director General of the International Institute for Administrative Sciences (IIAS) and the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA)

Course plan

In the first two sessions, we are going to explore together all of the current trends in ideas and developments that might have led to the crisis of the meaning of public action.

We will examine current topics of debate that are symptomatic of this fresh scrutiny: What bearing does the debate on cultural identity and national identity have on the French conception of the nation state? Does speaking about the respect of secularism in the public space far outweigh the constitutional principle of separation between Church and State and the neutrality of public services?

In the next three sessions we will ask you to identify and organise the concepts and challenges from which we can reformulate meaning. This solid foundation that will strengthen the engagement of public servants and provide citizens with a vision of the future of society supported by four key pillars: values, principles, responsibilities and outcomes. The last session will be dedicated to exploring points of vigilance and actions needed to guarantee effective public actions and prevent the risks of ‘maladministration’.

- **Session 1:** The meaning of public action in crisis
- **Session 2:** The concepts creating meaning central to current debates
- **Session 3:** Values
- **Session 4:** Ethical principles
- **Session 5:** Societal responsibilities and outcomes
- **Session 6:** The risks of ‘maladministration’

Assessment

This MOOC will entitle you to a statement of accomplishment linked to the completion of specific activities that will be awarded by FUN and the Centre National de la Fonction Publique Territoriale (CNFPT)

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